

**MINUTES OF THE CENTRAL WASATCH COMMISSION (“CWC”) STAKEHOLDERS COUNCIL RECREATION SYSTEMS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2023, AT 2:00 P.M. THE MEETING WAS CONDUCTED BOTH IN-PERSON AND VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM. THE ANCHOR LOCATION WAS THE CWC OFFICES LOCATED AT 41 NORTH RIO GRANDE STREET, SUITE, 102, SALT LAKE CITY UTAH.**

**Present:** Sarah Bennett, Chair

Barbara Cameron, Co-Chair

Dennis Goreham

Kirk Nichols

John Knoblock

Hilary Lambert

Ian Hartley

Emily Salle

Patrick Nelson

Patrick Shea

**Staff:** Lindsey Nielsen, Executive Director

Samantha Kilpack, Director of Operations

**OPENING**

1. **Chair Sarah Bennett will Open the Public Meeting as Chair of the Recreation Systems Committee of the Central Wasatch Commission Stakeholders Council.**

Co-Chair Barbara Cameron called the Central Wasatch Commission (“CWC”) Stakeholders Council Recreation Systems Committee Meeting to order to 2:00 p.m. and welcomed those present. She noted that Chair Sarah Bennett would join the meeting shortly. Co-Chair Cameron asked the attendees to introduce themselves. Dennis Goreham reported that he is the Conservation Director for the Wasatch Mountain Club. Kirk Nichols is the President of the Evergreen Homeowners Association (“HOA”) and a professor at the University of Utah. John Knoblock serves as Chair of the CWC Stakeholders Council and was also on the Mount Olympus Community Council.

Emily Salle serves as the Trails Stewardship Director for the Cottonwood Canyons Foundation. She was the Trail Crew Lead during the 2023 season. Ian Hartley is with the Mountain Trails Foundation. Patrick Nelson is with the Salt Lake City Department of Public Utilities – Watershed. Co-Chair Cameron clarified that Mr. Nelson is not an official member of the Recreation Systems Committee, but he is an important stakeholder in the area. Co-Chair Cameron explained that everyone was asked to introduce themselves because this was the first meeting of the Recreation Systems Committee. Members of CWC Staff were also present.

**REVIEW OF THE MOUNTAIN ACCORD CHARTER**

1. **Committee Members will Review the Mountain Accord Charter and Identify Key Takeaways.**
2. **Committee Members will Discuss and Rank Potential Goals for the Committee to Pursue.**

Co-Chair Cameron asked for Committee Member feedback about the Mountain Accord Charter. Mr. Goreham thought the Mountain Accord document still held up well. There was nothing in the document that he disagreed with after re-reading the language. That being said, certain things have changed, so it would likely be appropriate to make some additions. Mr. Nichols believed the Mountain Accord still made sense and was something that should be considered by the Committee.

The Committee discussed the recreation-focused portion of the Mountain Accord Charter. Co-Chair Cameron reported that she and Chair Bennett discovered that mountain winter trails were not included specifically. That was the reason the Consideration of Winter Recreation item was added to the meeting agenda for discussion. Mr. Goreham commented that the recreation section that addresses trails is fairly generic. It does not mention summer or winter trails specifically as it is general in nature. Mr. Knoblock noted that the challenge for the Committee is to focus on the agreed-upon actions in the Mountain Accord and think about what else should be addressed. He acknowledged that there are some generalized statements in the agreed-upon actions of the Mountain Accord. Adding more detail to those statements might be something to consider.

Some elements of the Mountain Accord address ski resorts and skiing. Item 3.6 of the document mentions improving Silver Fork Canyon access. Mr. Knoblock believed something like that had been added for backcountry skiing but could apply to summer use as well. Mr. Nichols was looking at the Idealized Recreation System document and wondered if that was what the Committee was discussing. Co-Chair Cameron confirmed that there was a desire to review that as well. Mr. Knoblock clarified that the Mountain Accord Charter had intended outcomes and agreed-upon actions. The Idealized Recreation System was a separate document.

Mr. Knoblock reported that he sent a document to Chair Bennett and CWC Staff. It listed the intended outcomes and agreed-upon actions. Some applied more specifically to recreation:

* Prohibit ski area expansion beyond the map changes on the Forest Service land;
* Support ski resort infrastructure improvements with the standard permitting process;
* Improve Silver Fork Canyon access;
* Create a private land acquisition program for environmental and recreation uses;
* Improve cycling and pedestrian uses in Big and Little Cottonwood Canyon;
* Include bicycle paths and pedestrian ways up Parley’s Canyon;
* General Millcreek road cycling and pedestrian improvements;
* Develop and implement a comprehensive trail and cycling plan; and
* Study the environmental and social capacity of the Cottonwood Canyons for more recreation.

Mr. Knoblock reported that the items were agreed-upon actions that impact the Recreation Systems Committee. Co-Chair Cameron questioned whether there was one specific action that the Committee wanted to prioritize. It was determined that the Committee would review the Idealized Recreation System document before discussing potential items for Committee prioritization.

Mr. Nichols shared comments about the Idealized Recreation System Supporting Narrative document. He read the document thoroughly ahead of the meeting and felt that a tremendous amount of work needed to be done there. It might be best for the Committee to leave the document as it was, but then create a new document that is appropriately updated. Mr. Nichols stressed the importance of determining a direction for the Recreation Systems Committee. Chair Bennett noted that she and Co-Chair Cameron had discussions prior to the meeting. There was a desire for the Committee to look at the original Mountain Accord and determine whether any goals or action items needed to be changed. She noted that not everything in the document is still applicable. Some of the main goals, such as accessibility, variety of opportunities, and quality of the recreational experience were still relevant. However, the land exchanges were no longer being pursued. There were also references to acquiring lands for trail connections and acquiring properties to bolster access. Chair Bennett felt that the Committee needed to add the possibility of easements to the existing language.

Chair Bennett read the following language, “Tightening restrictions on Federal land while allowing for recreational uses.” She considered it to be a problematic statement. That being said, there was a lot of relevant language to consider, such as, “Improving and connecting the regional trail network,” “Connect recreation destinations with trails,” “Improving transit service,” and “Directing future recreation growth to the resorts.” As for references to user fees, there was some movement with that. Chair Bennett wanted to add language related to community trails. It was important to think about the role of community trails in the plan as well as connections. Broadening water protections was something more closely related to the environment but still overlaps with the recreation work. As for winter recreation, that was something she felt the Committee should discuss.

Co-Chair Cameron thought a feasibility study for a year-round trail connecting Brighton to Cardiff was an exciting concept because Rocky Mountain Power has been doing undergrounding of all the electrical lines. As a result, the easement trail that goes all the way up the canyon will no longer be used by them. It might be possible to reuse that easement as a trail. Chair Bennett asked for additional Committee Member feedback about the Idealized Recreation System document.

Mr. Nichols noted that the One Wasatch and Transportation Connection referenced in the Idealized Recreation System is no longer on the table. He questioned whether the Committee would change the document or if it would remain as a historic document. There was still some uncertainty about the path forward for the Recreation Systems Committee. Executive Director, Lindsey Nielsen, explained that one of the reasons the Stakeholders Council committees were restructured was to more closely resemble the Mountain Accord process. The intention was to revisit the Idealized System reports, not to recreate or rewrite the Idealized System reports. The Committee Members could look at what was included in the report and determine future priorities. As mentioned earlier in the meeting, it would also be worthwhile to look at where some of the gaps might be. The reports were fantastic historical documents based on consensus but 10 years old at this point, which meant there might be some different needs now that should be considered by the Committee.

Mr. Nichols believed the idea was for the Committee to look at the Idealized Recreation System document for relevant information, gaps, and ideas that were no longer relevant to the scope of work. This was confirmed. Ms. Nielsen pointed out that something that came out of the Mountain Accord specific to recreation was a regional bicycling plan. That was not something the CWC had focused on yet and it could be a project for the Recreation Systems Committee to tackle. Mr. Knoblock shared information about the Mountain Accord process and how the Idealized System reports were drafted. Certain items from the Idealized System reports were added to the Mountain Accord where there was consensus. He reiterated that the Mountain Accord was a consensus-based document and process.

Mr. Nichols thought one way to start the review of the Idealized Recreation System document was to cross out sections that were no longer relevant. That would make it clear what to focus on. One Wasatch was no longer being proposed and neither was the Transportation Connection, so that language could be crossed out. The Committee could focus on what remained once those removals were done. Ms. Salle asked about the achievements since the document had been drafted. She wanted to better understand what actions had been taken. Some deliverables that had been achieved were:

* Create a government body to carry out what was laid out in the Mountain Accord (CWC);
* Facilitate long-term and short-term special projects (CWC and Short-Term Project Grants);
* Environmental Dashboard.

The other action items mentioned in the Mountain Accord were works in progress with the exception of the land exchanges, which had fully been removed from the scope of the CWC work. Three of the action items had been fully achieved, one had been deemed not feasible, and the rest were in progress or yet to be addressed. Patrick Shea wondered why the land exchanges had been fully removed. There were over 2,500 acres in Salt Lake County alone of remnant lands. It seemed to him that those exchanges could still be made as long as they involve governmental entities. Ms. Nielsen reported that the land exchanges were removed from the most recent version of the Central Wasatch National Conservation and Recreation Area Act (“CWNCRA”). Those were removed from the 2020 version of the bill after many hours of meetings with the interested parties, including the U.S. Forest Service and the ski resorts. Ultimately, it was determined that the dollar-for-dollar land exchanges that the bill dictated were not feasible because the land proposed to be traded into public ownership to the Forest Service was much less valuable in terms of dollar value than the land that would be traded into private ownership to the ski resorts. The other reason was that the Forest Service determined the land to be well past the point of environmental degradation due to historic mining activities.

Mr. Knoblock noted that Mr. Shea had raised an interesting point. There were two references to land acquisition and land exchanges in the Mountain Accord. One related to the ski area and Forest Service land exchanges. The other was: “Develop a program for acquisition of private lands with environmental and recreation values.” There might be opportunities for different land exchanges. Mr. Shea reported that in Park City, there were a lot of remnant mining claims that either BLM or the Forest Service had, and those were exchanged out to private owners who wanted to develop but could not. He felt it would be worth the CWC revisiting the land exchange issue. Mr. Shea offered to speak to BLM and the Forest Service about some of the possibilities. Ms. Nielsen clarified that the land exchanges, as referred to in the context of the CWNCRA, were the only land exchanges that had been determined to be not feasible. The other part of the Mountain Accord that the CWC had not focused on yet related to private land acquisition. That was still on the table and could be a future focus.

Chair Bennett noted that smaller parcels could assist with additional recreation access. It might be worthwhile for the Recreation Systems Committee to create some sort of inventory of lands in the study area. Certain parcels could provide that necessary recreation access. Mr. Knoblock discussed recreation and the pieces of the Mountain Accord that had moved forward. The Forest Service, with funding from the County, was working on the Tri-Canyon Trails Master Plan. Since the Mountain Accord was written, a bicycle lane has been added in the lower half of Millcreek Canyon to the winter gate. There was hope that the bicycle lane could be extended to the top of the canyon as well. In Big Cottonwood Canyon and Little Cottonwood Canyon, both of the canyons had been milled and overlayed to renew the surfaces. Additionally, when the Utah Department of Transportation (“UDOT”) restriped the road, the lanes were shifted over a foot so there was a one-foot shoulder on the downhill lane and three feet of shoulder on the uphill lane. In Little Cottonwood Canyon, for the most part, the lane was actually four feet wide. As a result, road bicycling in those canyons has improved.

Co-Chair Cameron asked about the water treatment plant at the mouth of Big Cottonwood Canyon. The latest she had heard was that the work would start in 2026, but the road overlay would occur in 2024. Mr. Nelson reported that the plan was delayed. One of the big projects that would come first was a pipeline connecting the intake at Big Cottonwood Canyon to the plant at the mouth of Little Cottonwood Canyon. He was not certain what the schedule for the rebuild was estimated to look like.

Chair Bennett wondered whether there were any Committee Member comments on what had been accomplished so far and the focus of the work moving forward. Mr. Nelson thought the fact that the CWC existed and people continued to convene was a meaningful achievement. From the signing of the Mountain Accord to the establishment of the CWC, a lot has been done to move forward important work. Ms. Nielsen reminded those present that the CWC was unique as there was nothing else like it in the country. The purpose of the CWC was to think about different issues facing the study area but also to talk about those issues. There was power in convening and sharing ideas.

Chair Bennett noted that the Recreation Systems Committee would not be asked to recreate an Idealized Recreation System document, but it was possible to create a list of items that were still relevant. The Committee could then set goals to work towards as the Committee work continued.

**CONSIDERATION OF WINTER RECREATION**

1. **Committee Members will Discuss Winter Recreation Interests within the Committee and Potential Goals and Topics for Consideration.**

Chair Bennett believed it was important to further discuss access points and the quality of experiences. Winter recreation was something that she felt should be considered. She will be meeting with the Wasatch Backcountry Alliance next week. The Wasatch Backcountry Alliance wanted to share some of their ideas and concerns about the more dispersed style of recreation throughout the canyons. Mr. Goreham noted that the Idealized Recreation System document talked about promoting recreation in areas that could accommodate the use and protecting difficult-to-access and pristine areas. The Wasatch Backcountry Alliance, Save Our Canyons, the Wasatch Mountain Club, and many others still agreed with that approach. There could be different zones suitable for different types of recreation.

Chair Bennett stressed the importance of providing visitors with a 45-minute to 1-hour experience and being able to provide that sustainably. Some thought could be put into how to make closer access points more desirable so there could be shorter, more succinct experiences. Mr. Goreham believed that could be addressed through an inventory. Co-Chair Cameron asked whether the Wasatch Backcountry Alliance had an inventory already. Chair Bennett offered to ask them about that and speak to them about some of their access concerns. Mr. Goreham pointed out that there was a lot of overlap between the work of the different Systems Committees. There would need to be a fair amount of coordination during the Systems Committee processes. Ms. Nielsen explained that the four Systems Committees were interconnected. One could not exist without the other. There would be overlapping issues from time to time. It would be possible to have members of the Recreation Systems Committee attend another Systems Committee Meeting whenever that was necessary.

Chair Bennett asked for additional comments about winter recreation. Mr. Hartley reported that the Mountain Trails Foundation had a program provided in part by the CWC called Transit to Trails. It was a shuttle system that provided transportation between the Bonanza Park neighborhood and Empire Pass. The area was accessed using a private road. It was effective in terms of dispersed recreation, honoring the spaces, and providing access. He shared a link with information about the program in the Zoom chat box. Transit to Trails was a good example of the way recreation served transportation and vice versa. It had also been a success story for the community. Chair Bennett asked how long the Transit to Trails program ran. Mr. Hartley reported that it ran until the end of the month. Part of the limited window had to do with access to the private road that was used.

Mr. Nichols believed that a good place to start was with the Forest Plan. There were a lot of maps included in that document as well as definitions of what could happen on those lands. It was a wonderful place for Committee Members to learn more. He pointed out that it was important not to propose plans or create plans that would be impossible for the Forest Service to accept. Mr. Knoblock asked that a link to the Forest Plan be shared with Committee Members. Ms. Nielsen believed the comment made by Mr. Nichols was necessary to keep in mind. Anything that was proposed needed to be considered within the confines of the CWC scope of work. Since the Recreation Systems Committee would mostly look at Forest Service lands, the desires of the Forest Service also needed to be considered. Mr. Knoblock explained that a challenge with the Central Wasatch was that there was a mixture of private and public lands. The original Mountain Accord boundary was half a mile to the north of I-80. However, when the CWC was formed, the Mountain Accord boundary was drawn slightly differently. Discussions were had about trails, tail connectivity, and access in the area. Chair Bennett noted that Parley’s Canyon included a major transportation route between the front and the back. There were opportunities to access recreation from that corridor, but there were some limitations there given the boundary map the organization had to work with.

Mr. Knoblock talked about potential improvements to the condition of the Great Western Trail between Lambs Canyon and Big Mountain Pass. That could have increased the importance of accessing whatever trail development took place on the 910 parcel. He reported that the 910 parcel was on the east side of the Wasatch Crest north of I-80. Mr. Hartley explained that details about that were starting to come out. It could be an important keystone property. Chair Bennett noted that the parcel would contain a section of the Great Western Trail. That was significant because it was one of two trails that had been identified by the Forest Service to receive special consideration for implementation.

Chair Bennett wondered whether it was possible to reference access points and connections outside of the CWC boundaries. Ms. Nielsen explained that anything the Committee wanted to work on should take place within the CWC boundaries. Mr. Goreham asked about a scenario where a trail was mostly in the CWC boundary area, but there was an access point a mile out. Ms. Nielsen confirmed that the access point could be considered in the discussions, but the intention was to focus on the CWC area. The Environmental Dashboard included data that extended past the jurisdictional boundaries of the CWC because water and air quality went beyond jurisdictional boundaries. If the Committee wanted to develop a plan for maintenance of a specific trail and made a request to the CWC Board for funding of that maintenance, the proposal would be limited to the CWC boundaries.

**REVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF COMMITTEE PURPOSE AND GOALS**

1. **Committee Members will Discuss Their Vision, Purpose, and Goals for the Committee.**

Chair Bennett explained that the first Recreation Systems Committee Meeting intended to have a high-level conversation about the Mountain Accord, winter recreation, and the vision for the Committee moving forward. Committee Members could identify what there was a desire to accomplish at a Committee level. She noted that Committee Members could look at the Mountain Accord document and select items to move forward with. That could be done individually and the selections could be compared and discussed at the next Recreation Systems Committee Meeting.

Co-Chair Cameron wanted to see the Committee focus on signage to promote stewardship, but that might be a better idea for a short-term project rather than an area of Committee focus. Ms. Nielsen reported that there had been discussions about a potential short-term project proposal from the Stakeholders Council as a whole. However, there were questions about the implementation. Mr. Goreham pointed out that there were a lot of different signs needed and it would be challenging to determine where to locate them with whatever money was potentially awarded. Chair Bennett believed a professional communications person could be hired to create an appropriate sign plan. Mr. Knoblock reported that part of the Tri-Canyon Trails Master Plan was dedicated to signage. Chair Bennett suggested that the Committee make a list where trails were desired. From there, it would be possible to have discussions with the Forest Service and find someone to assist with the development of a signage plan with appropriate branding. Ms. Nielsen liked the ideas that had been shared so far. The research and planning were well within the scope of the Committee. Ultimately, she believed that any proposal for grant funding should come from an individual organization.

Discussions were had about the Short-Term Projects Grant Program. Chair Bennett believed the requests could be for amounts under $10,000. Ms. Nielsen clarified that there had not been discussions about the details for the upcoming grant program season yet, but those would take place shortly. In the first year of the program, the maximum request amount was $20,000, but the maximum amount could vary from year to year based on the amount of funding that was available. This year, there was nearly $100,000 that could be distributed to short-term project requests. Chair Bennett asked about a comprehensive cycling plan. A professional could be hired to work on a Feasibility Study, but that would be more expensive and would likely be outside of the scope of the grant program.

Mr. Knoblock reiterated that the Tri-Canyon Trails Master Plan would include information about signage. He did not believe there needed to be a separate small project for signage, but there could be additional discussions with Zinnia Wilson and Chelsea Phillippe with the Forest Service. It would be possible to work within the existing Forest Service program. A draft version of the Tri-Canyon Trails Master Plan would be released in the new year and the Committee could share comments at that time. Mr. Goreham thought it would be powerful if the CWC sent in relevant comments and suggestions related to signage. If the Recreation Systems Committee drafted comments, those would need to be forwarded to the Stakeholders Council and then the CWC Board. Timing would be critical.

Chair Bennett believed there was support to develop a list related to signage. She asked whether there were any other Committee ideas, such as a cycling plan. Mr. Knoblock suggested discussing the purpose and goal of the Committee broadly before specific items were contemplated. One example was to implement the recreational enhancements that were agreed to in the Mountain Accord. From there, the generalized statements in the Mountain Accord could be broken down into more specific projects or tasks. Chair Bennett stressed the importance of access to recreation. She clarified that access could relate to transportation, small parcel acquisition, or an easement. There was also a human element to consider with access. For example, there could be educational signage added.

Ms. Salle further referenced times when access was compromised by heavy traffic and congested trailheads. Transit goals went hand in hand with recreation goals. Highlighting under 15-minute headways and a transit plan that worked for year-round trailhead access would be beneficial. She noted that it was important to consider winter access as well. Ms. Salle felt that stewardship and education were aligned with access. Essential components of access included advocacy about how to use trails correctly and what trail resources were. She hoped those elements would be contemplated in all of the access-related conversations. Ms. Salle shared information about her professional background and noted that she represented the Cottonwood Canyons Foundation. Mr. Goreham stressed the importance of education as that information enriched the overall trail experience.

Mr. Nelson noted that the Recreation Systems Committee would ultimately make recommendations to the Stakeholders Council and the CWC Board. He hoped that the Committee would look at how different partners could work together. Better communication and collaboration could make a notable difference. He agreed with the comments that had been shared about connecting the transit to the different trail plans. Mr. Nelson stressed the importance of finding funding for different projects.

Mr. Knoblock stated that in order to bring transit to trailheads, the Forest Service needed to do a National Environmental Policy Act (“NEPA”) analysis. NEPA was needed in order to create that kind of change to the way Forest Service lands were accessed. There would need to be proper restrooms, ADA compliance, and an analysis of the number of visitors that would be dropped off.

Ms. Salle referenced the Wasatch Transportation Academy through the University of Utah. While community members were allowed to take part in the class, it was largely focused on those obtaining their Master’s Degree in urban planning. She took the class last semester and the proposal her group created was for a transit to trails system in the Cottonwood Canyons. It was in the preliminary stages currently as the research had not received funding to continue to move forward. However, it had been presented to Ms. Wilson and Ms. Phillippe at the Forest Service. It was something she could share with Committee Members if there was interest in reviewing the proposal. Chair Bennett thought it would be beneficial for Committee Members to review the proposal and discuss what was included.

Chair Bennett asked Committee Members to review the Mountain Accord before the next Recreation Systems Committee and pull out the top three values. From there, it would be possible to determine a clear set of values and goals for the Committee to focus on. There have been discussions so far about access, signage, and transit. Those were three worthy goals for the Committee to pursue. She reiterated her request that each Committee Member review the Mountain Accord document and come back with some goals and values. The next meeting was scheduled to take place on January 11, 2024. She asked that the different values and goals be forwarded to her by January 5, 2024. Chair Bennett would organize the submissions received into a document and send that out to the Committee.

**CLOSING**

1. **Chair Bennett will Call for a Motion to Adjourn the Recreation Systems Committee Meeting.**

**MOTION:** Sarah Bennett moved to ADJOURN the Recreation Systems Committee Meeting. Dennis Goreham seconded the motion. The motion passed with the unanimous consent of the Committee.

The meeting adjourned at 3:27 p.m.

***I hereby certify that the foregoing represents a true, accurate, and complete record of the Central Wasatch Commission Stakeholders Council Recreation Systems Committee Meeting held Thursday, December 14, 2023.***

**Teri Forbes**

Teri Forbes

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Minutes Secretary

Minutes Approved: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_